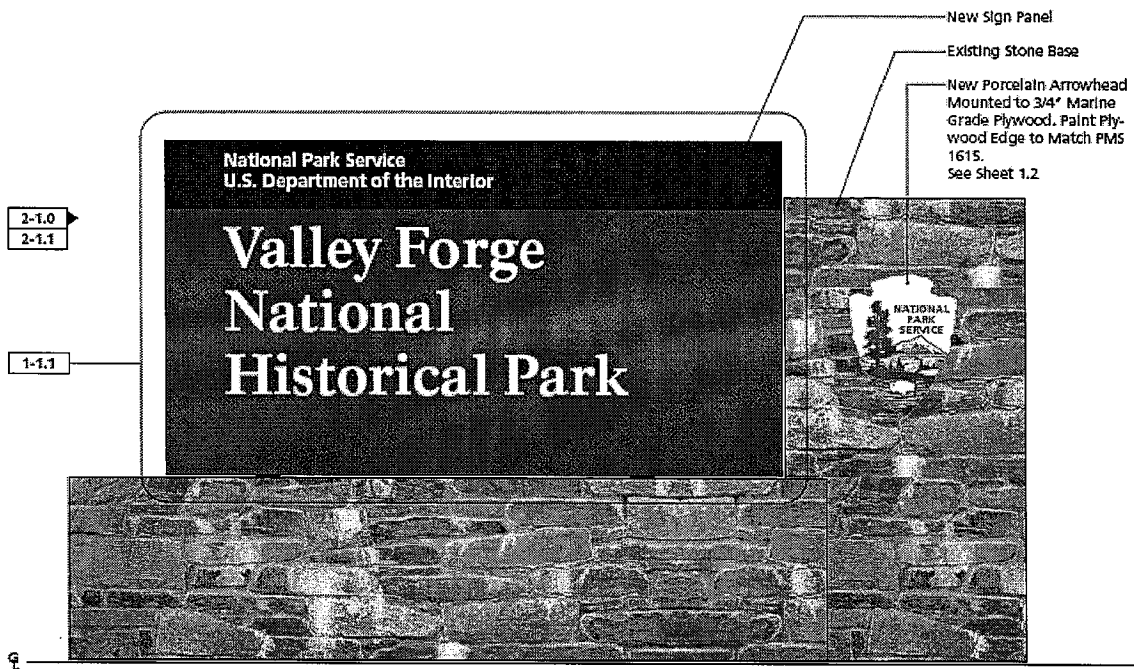


Valley Forge National Historical Park



Sign Plan

National Park Service
Spring 2006

1.0 Executive Summary

The *Valley Forge National Historic Park Sign Plan* was completed in early 2006. This was the first comprehensive inventory and analysis of all park signs. A total of 1,288 signs were inventoried including NPS, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and local government signs.

The plan includes short-term recommendations for the replacement, removal, and cleaning of many park signs. It also identifies other strategies that will help manage and improve the park signage.

The sign plan brings the park into compliance with *Director's Order No. 52C* that requires each park to develop a sign plan to guide the acquisition, installation, and maintenance of their signs prior to implementing the *Uniguide* standards. . *UniGuide* is a comprehensive set of standards for the planning, design, fabrication, installation, inventory, and maintenance of park signs.

The inventory and sign evaluation was as accurate as possible when it was conducted. Inevitably signs will be added, removed, and damaged. Without diligent updating of the inventory, it is likely to become outdated over time. To extend the usefulness of the data, someone within the park should be identified as the primary sign contact. This person could also serve as the park's *Uniguide* expert – a position recommended by the *Uniguide* standards. This person should be in direct contact with maintenance staff so that any sign repairs or replacements are properly recorded. The other key qualification for this position is a basic knowledge of GIS to ensure that digital data is as current as possible.

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2.0 Introduction

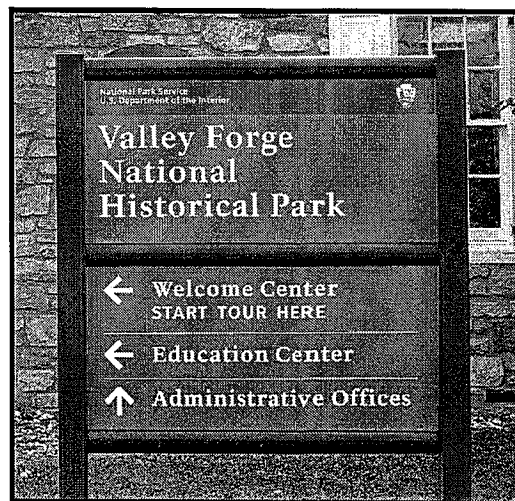
The *Valley Forge National Historical Park Sign Plan* was completed in May 2006. Sign planning is important because it offers the chance to review and learn from what was done in the past while preparing for the future. The sign plan for Valley Forge National Historical Park (NHP) includes an inventory of all the existing signs and recommended changes.

For many of Valley Forge's 1.2 million annual visitors, park signs provide the only direction, interpretation, or information that they will receive. A park tour with a critical eye reveals many signs that need to be cleaned, replaced, or even removed. The goal of the sign evaluation was to evaluate the type, condition, and need for each sign in the park as it relates to the visitor experience.

As with most planning exercises, there is no singular approach to sign planning. One could argue that more signs would help visitors understand the history of Valley Forge and more easily navigate through the park. One could also argue that fewer signs would help distinguish the park from the surrounding suburbs by creating a more distinctive visual experience. In either case, the raw number of signs in the park is impressive. A total of 1,288 signs were inventoried. The inventory includes National Park Service (NPS) and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) signs. Valley Forge NHP is only responsible for the NPS signs, but an awareness of all signs within the park boundaries is important when considering the overall park atmosphere.

Finally, it is important to note that on September 29, 2003 the National Park Service adopted new standards for park signs known as *UniGuide*. *UniGuide* is a comprehensive set of standards for the planning, design, fabrication, installation, inventory, and maintenance of park signs. The sign plan brings the park into compliance with *Director's Order No. 52C* that requires each park to develop a sign plan to guide the acquisition, installation, and maintenance of their signs prior to implementing the *Uniguide* standards.

Right: Information sign outside the Administration Building designed with the *Uniguide* standards.



3.0 Park Description

The purpose of Valley Forge National Historical Park is to educate and inform present and future generations about the sacrifices and achievements of General George Washington and the Continental Army at Valley Forge, and the people, events, and legacy of the American Revolution; preserve the cultural and natural resources that embody and commemorate the Valley Forge experience and the American Revolution; and provide opportunities for enhanced understanding.

Valley Forge National Historical Park encompasses 3,452 acres 18 miles northwest of center city Philadelphia. Within the park boundaries are many significant cultural resources, including cultural landscapes, historic buildings and structures, archeological sites, and archives and collections. Furthermore, as suburban development around Valley Forge continues, the park gains increasing value as a refuge for numerous plants and animals. Supporting over 1,000 species of wildlife, habitats within the park include oak/tulip forests, tall grass meadows, wetlands, and riparian buffers.

4.0 Sign Plan Purpose

The purpose of the sign plan is to present a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the signs within Valley Forge NHP. Thirty years have passed since the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed the care and management of Valley Forge to the NPS. Many remnants of the state's management persist today, including park staff, buildings, and signs.

Over the years, sign standards have changed both nationally and within the NPS. Since 1971, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has administered the publication of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The MUTCD is incorporated by reference in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 655, Subpart F and is the national standard for all traffic control devices installed on any street, highway, or bicycle trail open to public travel. The manual has its origins in a 1927 publication sponsored by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO). The MUTCD is currently in its ninth edition and provided guidance in the development of the sign plan.

Within the NPS, sign standards have also evolved. The previous sign standards date back to 1978. Since that time significant new drafting, design, inventory, and manufacturing changes have taken place that offered the NPS a chance to create new sign standard. On September 29, 2003 the most comprehensive set of standards for the planning, design, fabrication, installation, inventory, and maintenance was adopted. The standards are known as *UniGuide*. The *UniGuide* is a reference to the Unigrid Program, the graphic standard that has directed the design of NPS brochures and handbooks for the last three decades.

UniGuide provides the following justification for the new standards:

"Signs are the most frequently used means of communicating with the 300 million people who visit national parks annually. In order to ensure that parks have the best possible signs, new standards have been developed to guide the planning, design, and fabrication of a broad range of sign types, from motorist guidance, to park entry and facility identification, to pedestrian wayfinding, safety, interpretation, resource protection, and general park information."

The new standards offer park managers a way to integrate signs into a park's overall program goals by ensuring consistency in appearance and content with other media. As a result, communications will be more certain, more rapid, more effective, and visitor safety, convenience, responsibility, and enjoyment will be more assured. Additionally, signs will contribute more effectively to the public's perception of the National Park Service as one organization."

The sign plan will serve as a reference manual of existing conditions and recommended changes. The inventory and analysis data is directly linked to the park's geographic information system (GIS). By integrating the information with the park's GIS database it

will serve as a dynamic tool for park staff. The GIS system will allow the user to quickly reference the information on any sign within the park. The GIS program provides an interface between the geospatial data collected with a global positioning system (GPS) and the database inventory. From a user standpoint, the 'Info' button in the GIS program allows the user to click on any point to bring up specific data about each individual sign based a graphical interface.

4.1 METHODOLOGY

Director's Order No. 52C requires each park to develop a sign plan to guide the acquisition, installation, and maintenance of their signs. The inventory for the Valley Forge sign plan includes all the signs within the park and includes the signs maintained by the park, state, and local governments. The specific data collected for each sign included the location, type, direction, purpose, size, physical characteristics, condition, and the sign text. All of the signs were geospatially located using a GPS device. The point data was entered into the park's GIS system and was used to relate the sign location to the sign attributes recorded in a database.

In all, 1,288 signs were inventoried in the park.

4.2 HOW THE SIGNS WERE CLASSIFIED

The picture below shows one of the many multi-use trail signs located throughout the park. Based on the inventory's classification system it had the following characteristics:

Sign Type – Route Marker

Direction – E (orientation of the sign)

Sign Size – 6x6 to 36x36"

Letter Size – 3.75"

Background Color – Brown

Letter Color – White

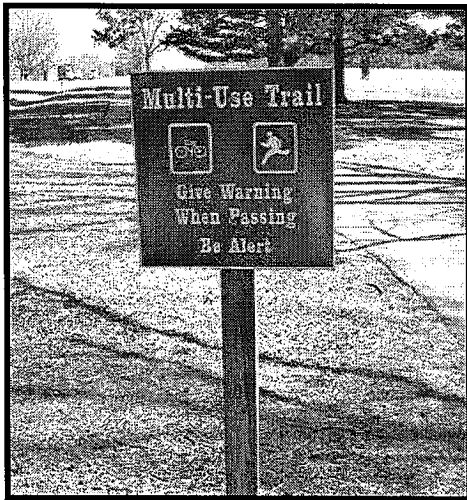
Post Materials – Wood

Face Material – Reflective Sheeting

Back Material – Aluminum

Sign Text - Multi-use Trail Give Warning When Passing Be Alert

Comments – Replace with Joseph Plumb Martin Trail sign



Left: Multi-use Trail Sign scheduled for replacement in honor of the trail's new namesake: Joseph Plumb Martin.

4.3 CATEGORIES AND QUANTITY

Ten potential types of signs were identified prior starting the inventory. All of the signs were classified in one of the following ten categories:

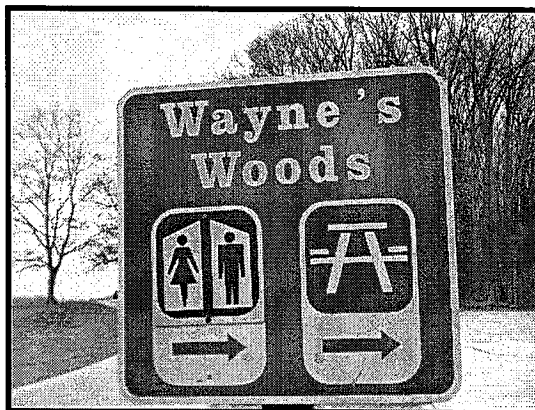
- Destination Signs
- Entrance Signs
- Information Signs
- Interpretive Signs and Waysides
- Plaques and Markers
- Regulatory Signs
- Route Marker
- Warning Signs

4.3.1 Destination Signs

As with most national parks, destination signs direct visitors to popular attractions. In all, 53 destination signs were identified. Most of the destination signs are in good condition and will serve the park well for many years to come. As the parks start to age, they should be designed and fabricated based on the new *Uniguide* standards.



Vehicular destination signs that direct visitors to two popular areas of Valley Forge NHP.



Other examples of destination signs include:

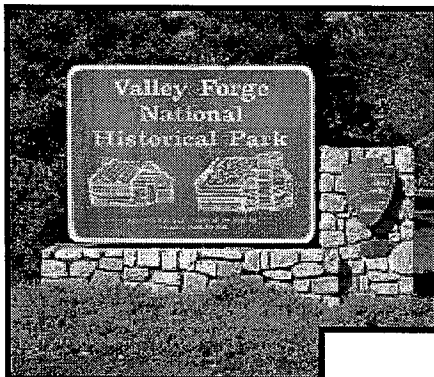
- Directions to area communities
- Location of key buildings and facilities
- Oversize-vehicle parking directions
- Schuylkill River crossing locations

4.3.2 Entrance Signs

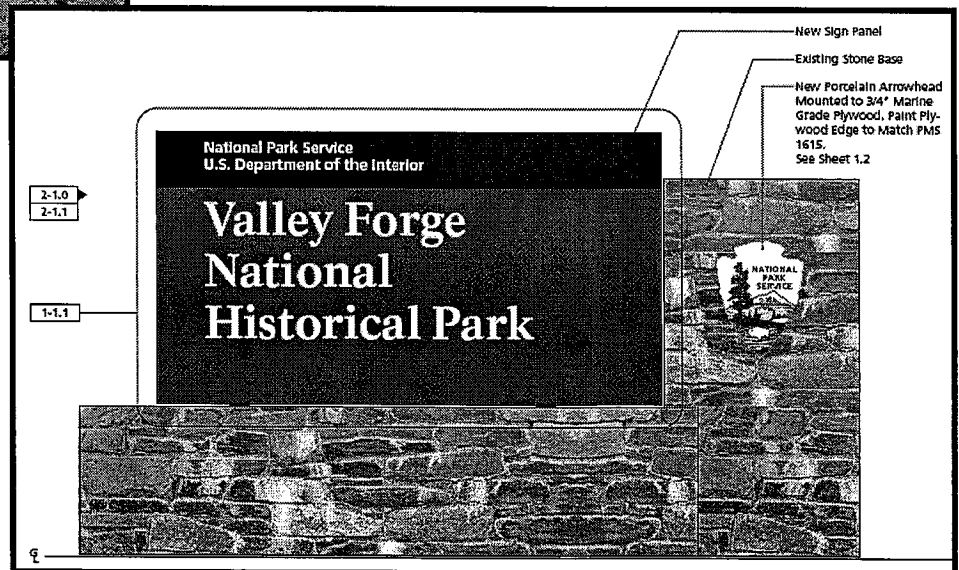
There are fourteen existing entrance signs to the park. Eight of the signs mark the gateways to the park. The remaining six mark entrances to special sections of the park such as the maintenance area. The signs are generally in fair condition but are not consistent with the *Uniguide* sign standards.

The park is relatively small compared to many national parks but it has numerous entrance points and thus the need for eight entrance signs. Updating the entrance signs would help define the park boundaries and enhance the parks image to first-time and long-time visitors.

To this end, staff from the Office of NPS Identity at the Harpers Ferry Center visited Valley Forge NHP to evaluate the existing entrance signs. Harpers Ferry Center staff prepared a detailed sign plan that includes the design and fabrication detail for new entrance signs. A comparison between an existing entrance sign and the redesigned version is shown below. The park also proposes a distinctive planting treatment in the location of each entrance sign.



Left: Existing entrance sign to Valley Forge NHP



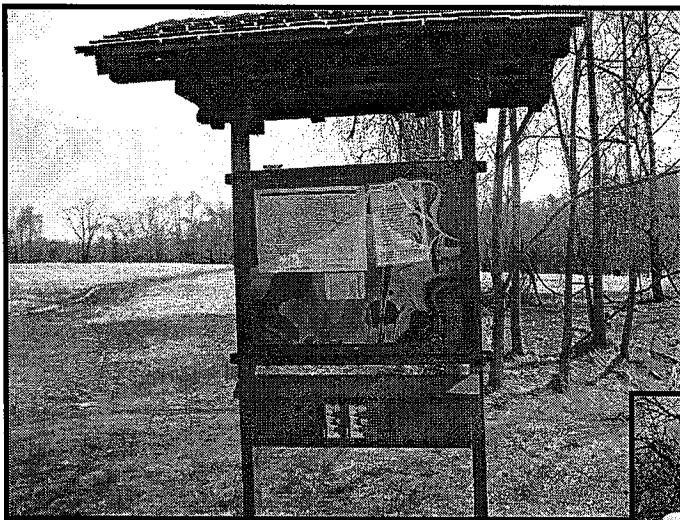
Right: Proposed entrance sign design prepared by Harpers Ferry Center.

4.3.3 Information Signs

The information sign category includes a broad spectrum of signs. Signs in this category include:

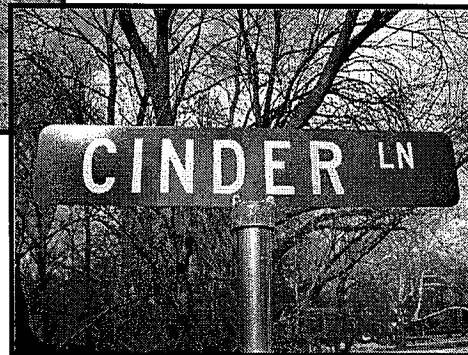
- Street signs
- Information kiosks
- Visitor information signs
- Bus stops
- Adopt-a-highway litter control
- Municipal boundaries
- Hours of operation

In all, there are 303 information signs in the park. Many of the signs are located within the park's boundary but are maintained by the state or local governments. For this reason, the condition and design varies considerably between the various types of information signs. When opportunities arise to replace any of the signs, they should be developed with the *Uniguide* standards in mind.

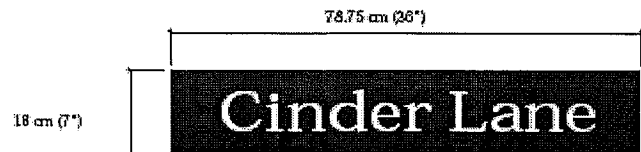


Left: Information kiosks are located in parking lots and at popular trail heads. The kiosks house trail maps, provide event information, and provide seasonal interpretation opportunities.

Right: Valley Forge NHP recently installed street signs as part of its effort to aid and expedite emergency response times. The street signs work in concert with a county-wide property addressing system. The street signs help responders quickly locate park buildings and resources.



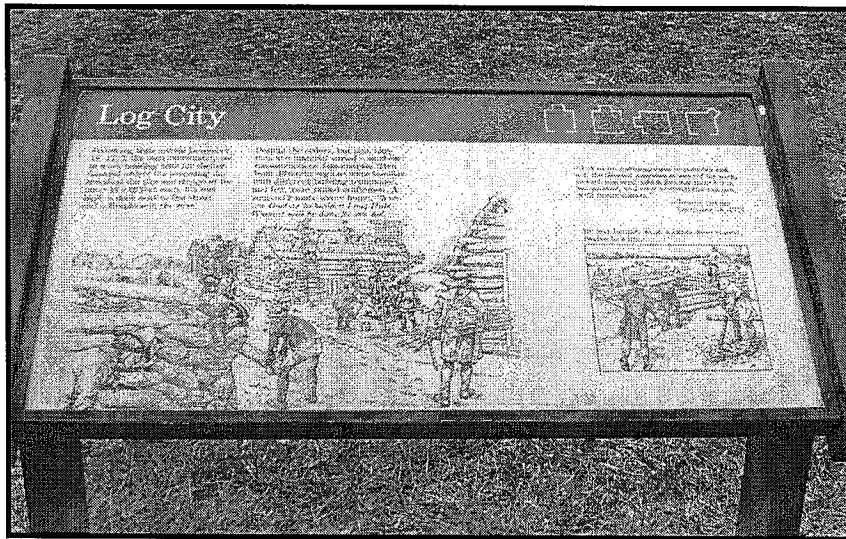
The signs are not consistent with *UniGuide* standards, however, and introduce a new suburban element to the park. The recommended *Uniguide* design is shown at the right



4.3.4 Interpretive Signs and Waysides

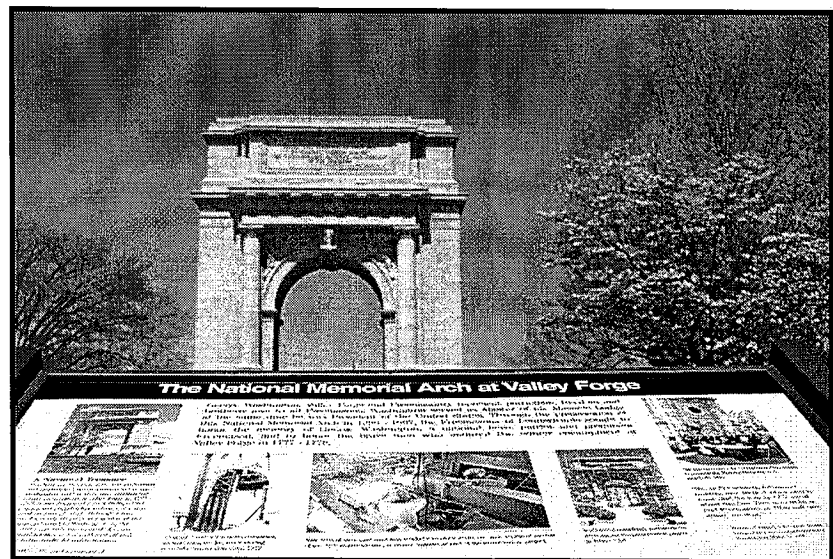
There are 43 interpretive signs and waysides in Valley Forge NHP. The purpose of the signs in this category is to convey information to visitors about a particular resource or the history of a particular location.

Some interpretive signs and waysides date back to when the park was owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Most of the signs remain in good condition some need to be cleaned however. The Schuylkill River is subject to flooding and the dirt and debris suspended in the water often ends up on the signs in the river floodplain.



Left: Wayside near Muhlenberg Brigade recounting construction of the soldier's huts along Outer Line Drive.

Right: Wayside at the National Memorial Arch.



4.3.5 Plaques and Markers

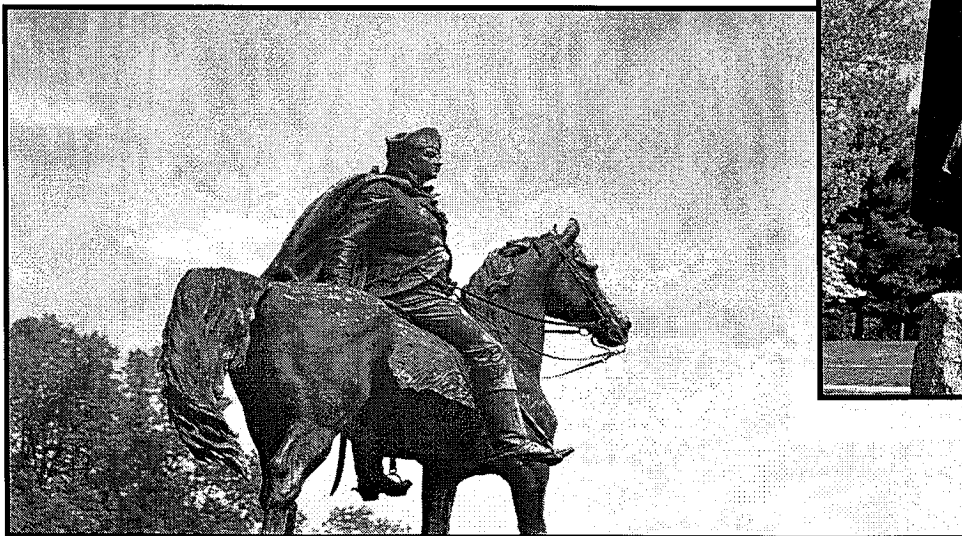
There are 32 plaques and markers in Valley Forge NHP. The plaques and markers serve the following functions:

- Indicate the location of state brigades during the encampment
- Honor the Patriots of African-American Descent
- Provide dedication information when groups or individuals have donated something to the park (e.g. reparation of the Washington Memorial Arch)

There are only three statues in the park and, because each includes wording, they are included in this category. The statues are of Anthony Wayne, Friedrich Wilhelm Baron von Steuben, and a soldier of the New Jersey regiment encamped at Valley Forge.

Right: Friedrich Wilhelm Baron von Steuben statue overlooking the Grand Parade.

Below: Anthony Wayne looking southwest towards his family home in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

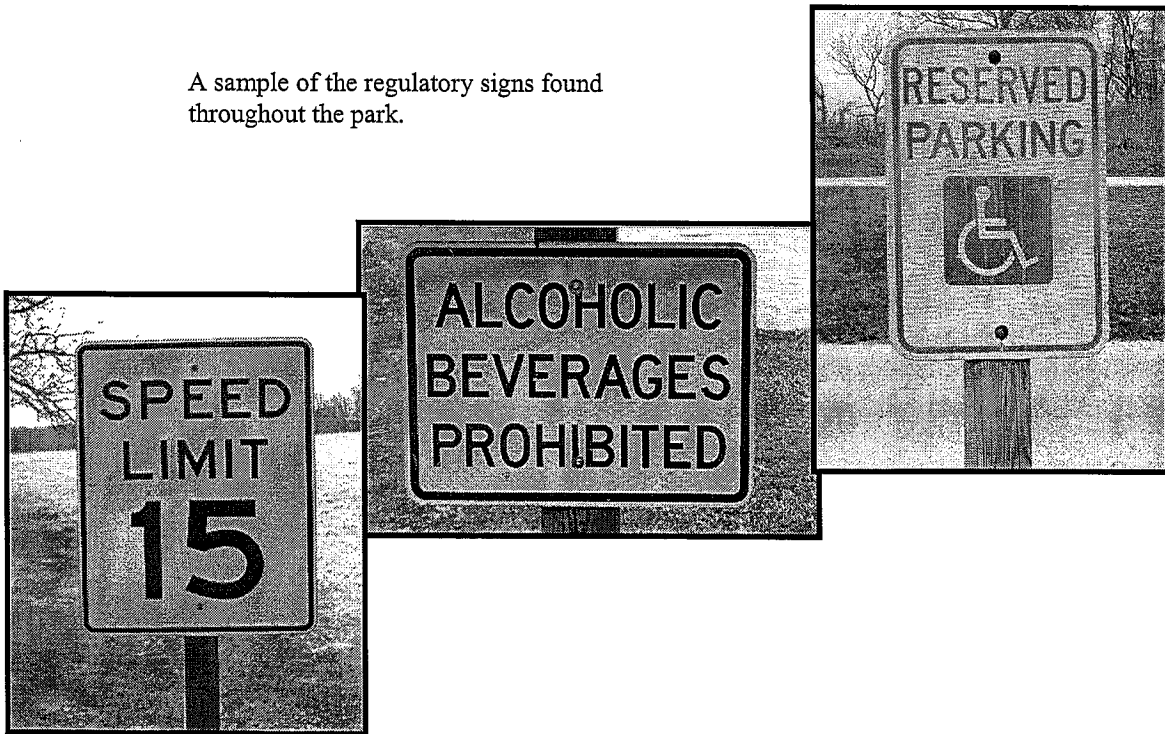


4.3.6 Regulatory Signs

Overall, the regulatory signage within the park is well-maintained. Most of the signs regulate the operation of vehicles. Two state highways are located within the park boundaries and vehicular signage is abundant on these facilities. On the roads with lower traffic volume, signage is more limited and consistent with the park's natural and cultural ambience. Regulatory signs include speed limit signs, traffic control, and regulated activities within the park such as the prohibition on alcohol. In all, there are 210 regulatory signs.

In 2006, Valley Forge NHP staff worked with PennDOT to reduce the posted speed limit in the village of Valley Forge area of the park. This measure is part of a greater effort to reduce the speed of traffic in the park on state highways. Small successes such as this one help establish a relationship between the park and PennDOT and may facilitate future changes. With the large number of PennDOT transportation projects in and near the park, staff should continue to build on this relationship, with the ultimate goal of making sign and roadway decisions that support the park's mission.

A sample of the regulatory signs found throughout the park.



4.3.7 Route Markers

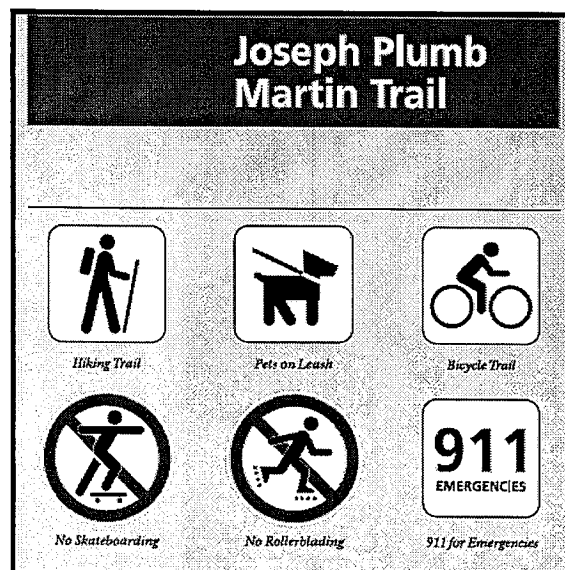
Route markers are used to provide direction to motorists and other travelers in the park. One of the most common route markers is for the Encampment Tour. Visitors on the encampment tour drive through the park while listening to an audio cassette tape or compact disc. Designated tour stops are marked with the blue and white signs.

Other route markers include trail signs for horses and hikers, Joseph Plumb Martin Trail signs, and Schuylkill River Trail. There are 106 route markers in the park.



Left: Encampment Tour sign associated with the park's audio tour.

Right: The new Joseph Plumb Martin trail sign.



4.3.8 Warning Signs

Warning signs are the most common category of signs in the park. In all, there are 513 warning signs, of which, 390 are owned and maintained by PennDOT. The signs warn motorists of changing road conditions, the presence of deer, and pedestrian crossings. Warning signs maintained by the NPS include parking restrictions, restriction on appropriate activities in the park, and road warnings.

Right: Warning sign regarding vehicle access.



Below: Warning signs to protect historic earthworks.



5.0 Sign Inventory

The inventory of the 1,288 signs in the park is managed in a MS Access database. Appendix D – Sign Inventory of this report presents the sign inventory in its entirety. Section 4.2 provides an example of how the signs were inventoried and the specific data that was collected.

A couple points should be noted about the data found in Appendix A – Sign Inventory. The reader may encounter gaps in the table. This occurs when a data entry field does not apply to a particular sign. For example, some signs only have symbols on them, therefore the Letter Size field is left blank. For many of the signs, the Sign Size and Letter Size are classified as Standard MUTCD. Common traffic signs like a stop sign or left turn arrow have universal dimensions and text based on the MUTCD and they were classified as such.

Finally, the evaluator's notes about the signs' condition were noted in the Comment field. The Comment field is adjacent to the Recommended Action field that denotes whether a particular signed needs to be removed, replaced, or washed. The Comments may provide insight as to why a particular action was recommended.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 SIGNS TO BE REPLACED, REMOVED, OR WASHED

A review of Appendix A – Sign Inventory, will reveal that specific actions are recommended for many of the park signs. Specifically, many signs were recommended to be replaced, removed, or washed. Additional details about the relevant signs can be found as in the report appendix as follows:

- Appendix A includes a map of the signs to be *replaced* and a report of the relevant signs.
- Appendix B includes a map of the signs to be *removed* and a report of the relevant signs.
- Appendix C includes a map of the signs to be *washed* and a report of the relevant signs.

The maps below show the location of all the signs mentioned in Appendix A–C.

6.2 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section document general recommendations that will improve signage throughout the park by consolidating information and simplifying way-finding.

- Each kiosk should have an identifier so that visitors are aware of their location (e.g. Artillery Park or Betzwood Picnic Area).
- Consolidate warning signs in the kiosks where possible. In some cases it may be necessary to post regulations as a separate sign, but this condition should be minimized. The sign that states “Warning Trail Subject to Freezing and Thawing Use at Your Own Risk” seems like an excellent candidate for relocation to the kiosk.
- Add a trailhead sign at the main lower level parking lot.
- Review the condition of the signs near the Schuylkill River after floods. Clean as necessary.
- Add text to the brown sign between lower level parking lot and the Welcome Center to provide additional direction. Recommended text: “← Administration ← Education Center”
- Near the von Stueben Memorial House, there are at least two signs that omit the ‘von’ in von Stueben. This should be corrected when the signs are replaced.
- Post directions to I-76/Turnpike for visitors leaving the park near the Welcome Center
- Need new encampment tour sign @ SR 23/Inner Line Drive

6.3 *LONG-TERM SUPPLEMENTAL TASKS*

While the Sign Plan and the inventory include an abundance of information, there are ways that it could be improved. The recommended long-term tasks include:

- Enter the sign data in the park's Facility Management Software System (FMSS).
- Conduct a qualitative assessment on score from 1-10 of the signs' condition. This will help prioritize sign replacement and budgeting.
- Photograph each of the signs for the FMSS.

7.0 Summary

The *Valley Forge National Historical Park Sign Plan* provides recommendations for short-term signage improvements while laying the foundation for their long-term maintenance. With the help of the park's maintenance staff, the short-term recommendations for sign replacement, removal, and washing can be implemented. The long-term utility of the sign inventory will be determined by the time and willingness of park staff to maintain the database and GIS data.

For many of Valley Forge's 1.2 million annual visitors, park signs provide the only direction, interpretation, or information that they will receive. For this reason, it is important to maintain an accurate inventory of the park's signs.